1998, decided to recommend to the National Development Council a reduction in the target rate of growth of GDP from 7.0 per cent per annum to 6.5 per cent per annum average over the five years of the Ninth Plan. This has been done to take into account the actual realisation of 5.1% growth during 1997-98 (i.e., the first year of the Ninth Plan) and expected realisation of about 6% growth during 1998-99 (i.e., the second year of the Plan). Implicit in this target is more than 7% of average growth during the remaining three years of the Plan.

Action taken on the Report of Shukla Commission

2152. SHRI PRAKANTA WARISA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are being taken by Government to implement the various recommendations of schemes made by Shukla Commission for the State of Assam;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the budgetary provisions made by Government during he current financial year and Ninth Plan, district-wise; and

(c) the reasons for delay for implementation of the said recommendations accepted by the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) The Shukla Commission submitted its Report in March, 1997. Further action in the matter, including steps to constitute a Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources for the North East, has since been initiated.

The Non-lapsable Central Pool of Resources is designed to assist development projects, such as in the infrastructure sector, in the North Eastern Region and Sikkim. The Central Pool comprises of contributions from the concerned Union Ministries/Departments from out of unspent amount (s) from 10% of their Budget (s) earmarked for the North East and Sikkim.

Project proposals relating, inter-alia, to the recommendations of the Shukla Commission, are envisaged to be identified from time to time for assistance, on merits, from the Central Pool.

Planning Commission's remark on Import Policy

2153. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission in a recent analysis of current status of imports and exports of agricultural and allied commodities has warned that the present import policy of some food items like wheat, pulses, edible oils and sugar could act as a disincentive to the Indian farmers adversely affecting the growth of the country's agriculture; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to make the country self-sufficient in these items?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) and (b) Planning Commission has neither carried out any analysis recently of the current status of imports and exports of agricultural and allied commodities nor has issued any warning to imply that the present import policy of some food items like wheat, pulses, edible oils and sugar could act as a disincentive to the Indian farmers adversely effecting the growth of the country's agriculture.

Criteria Fixed for Backward Area

2154. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria fixed to declare any area as backward;

(b) what are the areas in Mandi, Kullu, Lahaul Spiti, Kangara, Hamirpur, Una, Shimla, Rampur and Surmour in Himachal Pradesh declared as backward during the last five years together with the number of tribal dominated areas; and

(c) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to declare some more areas as backward; if so, what are the